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THE CRYSTAL PALACE AT SYDENHAM.

A PEEP IN THE INTERIOR.

THERE is now rapidly approaching completion, in all majesty and grace, one of the most extraordinary buildings the world has ever seen. In itself, in its contents, and in its object, it will stand out in broad distinction from every other structure, without a peer, and, except in two or three respects, without a predecessor. It may be true, nevertheless, that the Crystal Palace at Sydenham will be deficient in one source of interest, as compared with its forerunner in Hyde Park; for the latter was a struggle against difficulties from beginning to end: we may almost say, that a new style of architecture had to be created, and that this new style had to be elaborated in one single winter, wet and unpropitious for outdoor work. Just as the first printed book is more precious than a better but later one, so ought the first Crystal Palace to live in pleasant memory, even though it be followed by one more vast, more beautiful, more permanent, and devoted to more comprehensive purposes.

Every newspaper reader will remember that, consequent on the admiration which the Great Exhibition building excited, a wish was in many quarters expressed to retain that structure, for appropriation to some public purpose, after the Exhibition itself should be closed; but the Royal Commissioners had bound themselves to remove the building, and could not be released from their bond except by the legislature. There were suggestions thrown out for converting the building into a winter-garden, into a riding-school, into a sanitarium, into a college of industry, &c. After a busy array of meetings, speeches, motions, pamphlets, and newspaper leaders, it was at length finally decided that it should be handed over to the contractors, Messrs Fox and Henderson, and be by them removed. Some of the railway companies then negotiated for the purchase of the materials, to be re-erected into some sort of holiday structure in connection with their respective lines; but fortunately the building was prevented from being so used by the formation of a Crystal Palace Company, comprising many of those whose names had become familiar in connection with the former building. The boldness of their project astonished the general public. The capital was fixed at £500,000; the materials of the old building were to be purchased for about £70,000; and the remainder of the capital—capable of even still greater enlargement—was to be applied in the development of a scheme of vast and unprecedented magnitude. What the English people can do, when they relish the thing to be done, was strikingly shewn in this instance: the

company was provisionally registered on May 17, 1852; and within two or three weeks the whole of the shares were applied for, allotted, and accepted, and the whole half-million sterling speedily paid up.

At that period, midway between the Sydenham and Anerley stations of the Croydon Railway, and peeping picturesquely between the trees at some distance on the right, was a mansion called Peuge Place, built in the Elizabethan style on the site of an older mansion. At the west side of the park surrounding this mansion was an elevated spot, commanding a most varied and widely extended view on every side; and Sir Joseph Paxton felt, if he did not say, 'What a site for a Crystal Palace!' Others thought like him; and as the park was contiguous to the railway, and the railway company in harmonious union with the Crystal Palace Company, a purchase was speedily made of the mansion and park, the latter comprising about 300 acres. The resale of part of this park we shall have to mention by and by, as a remarkable proof of rise in the value of land consequent on this undertaking. The shares, then, being allotted; the capital provided; the royal charter obtained; the estate purchased and paid for; and all in readiness—then did every one put his shoulder to the wheel in hearty good Hyde Park spirit. The familiar names of Paxton, Fox, Henderson, Fuller, Owen Jones, Digby Wyatt, Belshaw, &c., indicated men who would not go to sleep over their work; and they have not gone to sleep. The first column was raised on August 5, 1852; and it was at first hoped and intended that the building should be opened in May 1, 1853; but the subsequent vast extensions of plan rendered this impracticable; and the day of opening will now probably be the 1st of May 1854.

What, then, is to be seen and heard at Sydenham, now towards the close of October? A short run by the rail will solve this question. Just when we have passed the Sydenham station, the new Crystal Palace makes its appearance on the right, or west, soaring up to an extraordinary height, and presenting features of far greater boldness than those rendered familiar to us in Hyde Park. The sides of the railway, the bridge at Anerley, the road thence to the building, and all the surrounding roads and paths, shew pretty clearly what is the state of bustle into which the neighbourhood intends to throw itself by and by. It may be well so to time our visit as to reach the building at noon, and then see 2000 or 3000 hearty and hungry men pour out in search of a dinner. Here are Messrs Fox and Henderson's troop; here Messrs Kirk and Parry's; here Messrs Myers': all alike, whether building a palace or making stone-terraces, or digging mountains and valleys of earth-work, ready to pounce upon a meal,

and do honour to it forthwith. Where they dine is a mystery, for the building is really out in the country. And it is worth while, too, to be in the Anerley road about five in the afternoon, and see 800 or 900 men besiege the railway station. A convenient plan is here adopted. So many of the workmen have their homes in London, that it is found necessary to furnish a means of conveyance for them. The railway company provide a down-train at five in the morning, and an up-train at five or six in the afternoon, to convey the whole of these men; the fare charged is extremely small, and is borne in certain proportions by the men and their employers.

On entering the building by one of the temporary gateways, what a heterogeneous mass of objects presents itself! Here is M. Brucciani's plaster-cast of the Charing Cross Statue, as large as the original; and round this are flower-pots containing plants in number absolutely uncountable. A little beyond, we get among bricks, and mortar, and dirt; and then among timber and scaffolding; and then among tubs of yellow paint, white paint, blue paint, and red paint, and monster lumps of putty, and crates of glass. Then succeeds a court or series of courts, in which artists are decorating the walls with exquisite taste, in encaustic or wax colours; and if we glance a little at the intelligent men who are thus employed, we see from their mustached lips and janty caps that they are mostly foreigners; and if we listen as well as look, we shall perchance hear them sing a concerted piece in such four-part harmony as English workmen—more is the pity!—seldom or never attempt while at work. It is quite evident, too, from little indications lying about, that Johann Schmidt, and Heinrich Müller, and Albrecht Hermann, smoke a little between whiles; nay, here is one of them with a meerschaum hanging on his lip, while painting a most graceful little Cupid. Emerging from this sumptuous court, we come among countless statues and busts from all countries in Europe, and of all kinds and sizes. Here is an Egyptian figure, which bids fair to be as high as a house when his head is on; and here sphinxes of Theban proportions; and here a cast from the head of Schwanthaler's colossal 'Bavaria'; and here Nineveh bulls and lions, Grecian goddesses, mediæval monks, bold alti-relievi, delicate bassi-relievi, Gemini small and large, frets and arabesques, and mouldings and ornaments; all cast in plaster, and all strewn about in such number as far exceeds anything yet seen in this country. Then we come again among the engineers and carpenters; and if we do not mind cricking the neck by looking up so high, we may see pigmy men building a huge transept, literally and not merely figuratively, as high as the Monument; and looking down, we may see others laying the foundation for a beautiful basin or small lake. And then we go through other courts, the architecture, and sculpture, and painting of which remind us of Egypt and Assyria, Greece and Rome, the Byzantines and the Moors, the Italians and mediævalists. Glancing out through the acreage of windows, we see terraces and basins, and preparations for fountains, such as eclipse even Chatsworth.

Such is the scene which just at present throws into bewilderment an uninitiated visitor at the Sydenham Palace; and, in truth, he ought to be bewildered by it, for we should have very little respect for the used-up nonchalance of a man who could take it all quietly. Every one, however, would soon wish to exchange this bewilderment for an intelligent appreciation of the plan pervading the whole; would wish—as Carlyle might express it—to convert Chaos into Cosmos. Let us at once, therefore, do our part towards this end, by explaining what are the objects in view, and in what manner these objects are being carried out.

When the company was formed, and the financial support secured, it was determined that the Sydenham Palace should not be merely a show-place, but a great

school of instruction; that it should educate through the eye in a mode never before attempted. Let the following give an idea of the plan:—There will be an Ethnological Department, comprising groups of different varieties of the human race, modelled as large as life; and these groups will be made as much as possible a book of instruction, by being accompanied by such costumes, armour, weapons, implements, vehicles, musical instruments, vessels, and ornaments, as may illustrate the manners and customs of nations. Those who know anything of the reputation of Dr Latham, will understand the value of having such a man to superintend this department. There will be a Botanical Department, in which growing plants will be arranged in regions, so as to group together those which belong to each particular climate. There will be a Zoological Department, comprising stuffed specimens of the largest variety of animals which can be procured; and what will be a most attractive feature is this—that in the geographical grouping, the botany and the zoology will be combined: there will be picturesque groups of the animals inhabiting different countries amongst the plants belonging to the same localities, so as to lay before the spectator, at one view, the characteristic forms under which life, both vegetable and animal, presents itself in each region of the globe. The quadrupeds and birds will be stuffed and attitudinised as much like life as possible; the fish will appear to be swimming; the groups of men and women will be in the vicinity of the plants and animals inhabiting the same region as themselves; and the soil and aspect of the region will be in some sense imitated. This extraordinary work is undertaken by Professor Edward Forbes, Mr Waterhouse, and Mr Gould, so far as regards the selection of the animal specimens; while the arrangement devolves upon Mr Thomson, curator of the Natural History Museum at King's College, London. There will be a Geological Department still more extraordinary; for it is intended not merely to build up rocks and strata to illustrate different epochs, but to people those regions with restorations of the gigantic antediluvian animals whose remains have been found in such regions. Let us only imagine the mastodon and the megatherium, and the ichthyosaurus and the plesiosaurus, and other monsters of a period unknown for its remoteness, crawling about, and glazing at us from an island in the midst of a lake. Such is what Professor Ansted, and Professor Owen, and Mr Hawkins are about to effect, so far as faithful and carefully formed models can insure it.

All these departments are of a scientific character; but a transition will be afforded from science to the useful arts by the formation of a museum of raw produce, under Mr John Wilson. The specimens will comprise such as now are, or may become, subjects of commerce and manufacture, arranged in such a manner as to afford the fullest possible information to the manufacturer and naturalist as to their quality, origin, and cost. The specimens will be classified as—minerals for ornamental purposes, minerals for scientific purposes, metallic minerals, combustible minerals, building materials, alkalies and salts, drugs and perfumes, vegetable substances used for food, animal substances used for food, timber and woods, textile substances, leather and furs, and such miscellaneous substances as starch, gums, resins, turpentine, oils, dyes, hoofs, horns, ivory, bones, &c. There were two collections at Hyde Park—one from Liverpool and one from Hull—which may give a humble idea of the much more extensive plan intended to be adopted at Sydenham.

The Exhibitors' Department—that which formed the heart and soul of the Hyde Park Exhibition—will be here only one among many. The manufactures exhibited will be much smaller in quantity, and will not be arranged geographically. It has by this time become pretty generally felt, that the 'council medals,' 'prize

medals, and 'honourable mentions' of 1851, are commercially of very little importance, however pleasant they may be to the recipients. We buy our knives of this cutler, and our pianofortes of this maker, and our dinner-plates of this potter, not because these manufacturers hold prize medals, but because the articles are good, and worth the money paid for them. On these and other grounds, the Exhibitors' Department at Sydenham will have more of a commercial character than it had at Hyde Park. The exhibitors will pay a rent for the use of the space appropriated to them—this rent is looked forward to as part of the revenue of the company—and in return for this, they will be allowed to effect sales in the building; but in order that the whole affair should not degenerate too much into a mere shop or bazaar enterprise, the directors reserve an unlimited discretion in dealing with each individual application for space, so as to exclude any objects that may appear inappropriate or unworthy. It appears to us that this is a matter of much importance, and deserving great care on the part of the directors; for if a toy-shop aspect should be given to the Exhibitors' Department, by admitting articles which are not so remarkable for their excellence as for being readily saleable, the dignity and educational value of the Crystal Palace will be lowered. Whether there could be formed a separate museum of manufactures, belonging to the company, and comprising a few of the finest specimens in each kind of manufacture, we do not know; but if the manufactures belong wholly to, and are sent in voluntarily by, individual exhibitors, there must certainly be not only claimed, but carefully exercised, a power of selection—a right on the part of the company to retain the wheat and reject the chaff. The directors, we believe, mean so to arrange, that not only shall there be a supervision over the goods generally, but that no goods shall be sold 'over the counter,' there being offices instead for receiving orders.

There is one feature contemplated by the directors which, if supported elsewhere, may be a means of conferring much benefit: it is the establishment of a Court of Inventions. The struggles of inventors, and the difficulty which they experience in steering their course amongst the net-work of patent-laws, are well known. Now it is believed by the directors, and we agree with them in the belief, that the new Crystal Palace might assist inventors and patentees, by affording them all necessary information and publicity, comprising an indexed register of patents, and a court of inventions, wherein models and working illustrations may be displayed. Intending patentees may thus ascertain what has been done by former inventors, and what yet remains to be done; while spectators will have before them the collected results of inventive genius.

One department of the comprehensive plan is distinct alike from science and from manufacturing art: it is that of fine art; and the skill of Mr Owen Jones and Mr Digby Wyatt, of Dr Layard and Mr Fergusson, of Mr Bonomi and Signor Abbaté, is developing a scene altogether without parallel. We hear in conversation, we read in books, of the buildings and architectural ornaments of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Pompeians, the Byzantines, the Saracens, and other nations; we have pictures of them in books, and fragments of their sculptures in the British Museum and a few other depositories; but what if we could have reproduced before us actual facsimiles of the buildings themselves? This is now being attempted, by a series of interiors, of which is a court, representing the interior of a temple, hall, house, or room, as the case may be. Walls are built up of brick, to form the walls of the building, and these are afterwards wrought up to a high pitch of elaboration, by plaster decorations, painting, and gilding—every minute detail of architectural decoration being attended to with the utmost fidelity.

We began this article by sharing the bewilderment of the visitor at the vastness of the unfinished scene at Sydenham; but now, having sketched out the plan which is to pervade the whole, we can better understand the mode in which the object is about being carried out.

The building, we have said, is situated on the brow of a hill facing the east, and commanding a magnificent view. Strictly speaking, the principal façade faces the south-east; but we will, for convenience, speak of the east and west fronts, and the north and south ends. The building is somewhat shorter and narrower than the Hyde Park structure, being somewhere about 1600 feet long, by perhaps 350 wide. But its height is so surpassingly greater, as to make it completely eclipse its predecessor. The whole length of the building is crowned by a semicircular roof, as high from the ground as the transept of the old building, about 100 feet. There are two transepts, of equal height, near the north and south ends; while there is one glorious transept in the centre, about seventy feet higher than these. After making allowance for a fall in the level of the ground, which renders the east or grand façade twenty feet higher, and for a louvre which surmounts the transept, this façade will rise to the extraordinary height of 200 feet; in fact, the Monument at London Bridge could stand under the main transept. There is, we imagine, no other building in England which, irrespective of tower or steeple, soars to a height of 200 feet in its main front. The east end of each of the three transepts, too, will be recessed twenty-four feet, thus giving some such effect as the recessed arches in front of Peterborough Cathedral, but on a much larger scale, for the central recess will form a magnificent crystal arch, nearly 200 feet high by 120 in width! And here we may say that this is indeed a *Crystal Palace*, for the proportion of glass to wood is even greater than that in the Hyde Park structure. The acreage of glazing is truly extraordinary—tier after tier of windows send forth their glittering beams of reflected sunlight, thus rendering the building visible from a wonderful distance. All the old materials from the other structure have been wrought up into this; but the additions in new iron and glass are immense. All the glass for the roof is thicker than before, and is fitted in a more water-tight manner. In order to break the uniformity of the long semi-cylindrical roof, low square towers are built at the intersections of the three transepts with the nave. By a recent improvement or enlargement of the plan, wings will stretch out eastward from each end of the building. The grand façade is made all the more majestic and striking, by the central and two end portions projecting in advance of the rest. The two ends of the building, as seen from the north and south, very much resemble in appearance the transept end of the old building; but the grand transept of the new building we can compare to nothing: it has nothing like a compeer, and we must therefore leave it alone in its glory.

The interior of the building has not so many parallel aisles as the old structure. There is a central nave, nearly 100 feet high, with rows of columns and galleries on either side; but these columns, at intervals of seventy-two feet, advance further into the nave, so as to present grander masses of varied light and shadow, as seen from the ends. The intersection of the arched transepts with the arched nave, the occurrence of low square towers at these spots, and the rich style of colouring adopted by Mr Owen Jones, present a scene to which the old building could afford no parallel; and when the great central transept is finished, the grandeur will be at its height.

In appropriating the space within the building, the central nave will have two elegant basins with fountains, bridges, statues, and plants—quite a galaxy of beauty; and other parts of the nave, and the central line of

each transept, will contain works of art of varied character. One striking feature in the whole will be, that along both sides of the whole length of the nave, and along the transepts, and round and between the various courts, will be a luxuriant garden of flowers and rare plants. When we hear of Sir Joseph Paxton having been busy with 10,000 camelias, 70,000 geraniums, Messrs Loddiges's palms from Hackney, and plants from every quarter of the globe for this garden, we may sit down and dream of what is to come. The courts for the Fine Arts before noticed, are eight or ten in number; and the manufactures will in like manner be arranged in courts rather than in aisles. The galleries, which command unspeakably grand views along the building, will be wholly devoted to manufactures, the fine arts and natural history collections being on the ground-floor, while the heavy machinery will occupy a basement range in the eastern half of the building. There will be a Refreshment Court in the Alhambra style, and another in the Byzantine style, wherein we can eat Bath buns and study decorative architecture at the same time.

It is really difficult to say within a few paragraphs all we desire to convey to the reader concerning this wonderful work; but in another article, next week, we hope to shew, in a 'Peep Round About,' that there is nearly as much of the strange and the instructive to be met with in the accessories to the new Crystal Palace, as in the Palace itself.

THE FEAST OF THE INGATHERING.

A LITTLE while ago, our readers were presented with an account of the festival given to the gentry of his parish by the good vicar of Bomonton, Dr Beaumont; and we intimated that a second was to follow, in which all the more rustic of the population were to have an evening of enjoyment and festivity. That gala duly took place at the close of the corn-harvest, and we cannot resist the temptation of endeavouring to place before the minds of our readers one of the most pleasant and joyous scenes that could possibly be witnessed, and give them a little sketch of the rural feast, in witnessing which we had ourselves so much enjoyment.

The Feast of the Ingathering was to take place in the same beautiful field we before described as the scene of the haymaking-party; but on this occasion it presented a wholly different aspect. It differed in two respects: first, that the autumnal winds and early frosts had touched the leaves of the trees, both in the upland field and in the copse by the river, and clad them with rich tints of crimson and scarlet, and purple and yellow. The berries of the wild guelder-rose now hung in clusters of glowing scarlet, whilst those of the dogwood displayed the coral hue which renders them such an adornment to the woods before their full ripeness deepens them into black; and hips and haws, and blackberries, with the long trailing stem of the red-berried bryony, now hung on the hedges, where before the July flowers had bloomed, and the ground was lightly strewn with scattered leaves, hinting that winter was not very far off. The other respect in which the field appeared under a different aspect from that which it formerly wore, was that, excepting some dozen or two of busy people, all engaged in spreading long tables with a plentiful supper, it was wholly devoid of human figures. A remarkable feature in the scene, as it now appeared, was, that all who were thus engaged in performing the office of servants, lifting tables and forms, spreading cloths and placing dishes, were the aristocrats of the village, the cottagers who were to be regaled being engaged in the corn-field on the hill, whence was presently to be brought the last wagon-load of the plentiful crop with which it had pleased the Lord of the harvest to bless his people.

The merry party engaged on the scene of action seemed exceedingly to enjoy the fun of acting as servants, and setting the supper-table, which was placed, as before, under shelter of the trees. There were Edith and Edward Savin, George Beaumont and his Una, now grown bold in the security of a sanctioned and acknowledged engagement, and as blithe and sprightly as ever. There was Emily Savin, and there, also, was Sir James Scott—there I may well say, for wherever Emily was to be seen, there was Sir James. If I had not had other business on hand all that evening, I might perhaps have made more sure of what was going on in that quarter, and told of whispered words between the handsome young baronet and the piquante Emily; but as it was, I must not venture to say more than that I had some shrewd guesses as to what the result of these disengaged and free opportunities of meeting might be. But I must proceed. There were Dr and Mrs Beaumont, and my aunt and uncle, and the Savins, and some dozen more ladies and gentlemen; and glad was I that I was of the number, for such scenes as those whereof I speak, and those which followed, are calculated to shed a pleasant and cheering influence over the heart, and to leave beneficial impressions behind them for many a long day; for surely these social meetings of different classes, tend to promote good-fellowship and kindly feelings, and to enlist our sympathies in the cause of benevolence and brotherly kindness.

And now, the tables being set, the seats placed, the trees hung by the children of the party with festoons of dahlias, and marigolds, and fuchsias, and other bright autumnal flowers, mixed with evergreens, and a most substantial supper laid out, the gate was thrown open, and those of the villagers who were not among the labourers in the corn-field were allowed to enter and take their places, not at the table, but at some part from whence they could enjoy a sight of the little procession which was to conduct the last wagon-load of corn to the spot it was destined to occupy during the time of the festivities. The number of the inhabitants of Bomonton was not so large but the good pastor was able to make his invitation almost general. Each family had an admission-ticket for at least two or three of its members, and none were excluded excepting a few whose misconduct had rendered them unfit associates for the more orderly and respectable people. Of course, however, so large a party could not be provided with a regular supper: it had therefore been arranged, according to the custom of former years, that noble joints of beef and mutton, both boiled and roasted—though all cold—huge apple-pies and plum-puddings, should be provided for the men; whilst a plentiful supply of tea, with abundance of cakes, both seed and plum, was prepared for the women and children. The village band was now heard approaching, and soon the little procession appeared in sight. The wagon, heaped with the golden sheaves, and gaily decorated with a flag and floral wreaths on the top, was preceded by the labourers, clad in clean white blouses, walking two and two, and carrying the pink and blue flags belonging to the village club. The horses which drew the wagon were gaily caparisoned with ribbons and flowers; and the rear of the procession was brought up by a throng of all the women and children who had been assisting in the field, dressed in holiday garb, and each bearing in her hand a bunch of wheat-ears, tied with pink or blue. At the gate of the field a halt was called, and a loud cheer was given by the workmen, and answered by the gentlemen, and then the wagon proceeded to a spot in the middle of the field, and the horses being released and led away to the stable, the merry-making began.

Not having before witnessed a Feast of the Ingathering, I had anticipated that this arrangement for the men and women not to share alike would lead to

the separation of families—that the men would be apart from their wives and children, and the character of the festival as a scene of social enjoyment would thereby be greatly injured. But this was not the case. I was delighted to find that the difficulty was obviated by an admirable plan which Dr Beaumont had adopted. Each man came with his plate to the carver of which-ever joint he chose to partake of, and received a handsome supply of meat; at another table he was furnished with about a pound of bread, some salt, and a pint of tea or coffee, and was then free to join his friends, or family, and eat his provisions in whatever part of the field he pleased. Meanwhile, the women and children were in like manner supplied with a bountiful helping of cake and tea, and each took up her quarters where she would. Abundance of forms, chairs, &c., were placed about the ground, the gnarled roots of the trees afforded seats to many; and as the season had been warm and dry, groups of children and young people found resting-places on the ground. It was a very pretty sight; the different parties looked so free and disengaged, and so much innocent mirth and laughter prevailed. It was quite of a picnic character, and the little difficulties which arose among the different groups—some of whom had forgotten to bring knives, others plates or cups, which, the doctor had given due notice, were to be provided by the guests for their own use—caused much fun and good-humoured scramble. Here was a father with his baby boy on his knee stuffing him with cake, and his wife, and two or three other young ones, all gathered round him. There another, with his two or three fine growing-up girls, and their matronly mother, all seated on a sunny bank together, with a young married daughter, and her husband and baby, and a fine handsome young harvester, the brother of the son-in-law, who seemed very likely, before the year was out, to have linked in his fortunes with that of the family, by taking the pretty Phoebe—a sweet, blue-eyed, modest girl, beside whom he sat—for his wife. The feasting proceeded with as much order as mirth; for the good master of the feast was too intimately known and too much respected by all his people for any unsuitable noise or confusion to be likely to take place under his eye; and as there was on this occasion nothing stronger than tea and coffee to be had, a great degree of hilarity and enjoyment prevailed without the chance of its exceeding due bounds.

And now, the meal being over, a few words of thanksgiving were offered by the pastor, and the signal was given for the rural sports to begin—not the sports of running after a pig with a soaped tail, nor of scrambling up a pole for a leg of mutton; but men, women, and children were to amuse themselves as they would. The copse was thrown open to those who liked a nutting expedition; an adjoining field was placed at the disposal of cricketers; the band was playing cheerful tunes as they paraded about the grounds; and every one was left to choose his own mode of amusement. The supper had occupied about an hour, and had commenced at three, so that some two hours remained before the time of dispersion—plenty of time for fun of divers sorts. George and Evelyn Beaumont, with the Savins, Sir James Scott, &c., took it in turn to watch over the conduct of the different parties of boys and young men who were engaged in their varied sports, and to lead them on in their pastimes. Evelyn Beaumont, a fine lad of eighteen, led on the cricketers on one side, and my cousin, Davenant Darcy, on the other; whilst George Beaumont was busily engaged in making tiny boys run races; and Sir James Scott and my uncle in superintending a leaping-match between several athletic youths, at the lower end of the cricket-field. Meanwhile, the little girls had formed an immense ring round the harvest-wagon, and were dancing round and round, holding hands, and singing most mightily. How the little creatures could keep on as

they did, I could scarcely imagine: I really wondered to see the spirit with which some thirty little damsels, from six to fourteen years old, continued to traverse that wide circle for so long a time without a moment's rest. It seemed a very great delight to them, for by degrees one after another joined the ring, till there was not a little petticoat left on the field that was not whisking round the magic circle. Some of the elder girls and young women were—I blush to own it, but they certainly were flirting. It was very wrong of them, but they did it; and I saw several very lover-like-looking couples strolling about, and seeming quite to enjoy it.

Among the throng of happy beings amidst whom it was my good fortune this evening to move, were one or two groups which particularly interested me. A little withdrawn from the most crowded part of the field, I observed a party consisting of four individuals: one of them was an aged man, exceedingly tall and erect, and clothed in a long blue wrapping-coat, the livery of one of those almshouses for old people which the piety of our ancestors so often led them to endow; his hair was long and as white as snow, and his clear blue eye, which was usually lifted to the heavens, was large and beautiful; he leaned on a staff, not as if weary, but rather as if from habit. I knew him well, and that, notwithstanding the apparent life of his eye, he was, and had been for years, totally blind. Seated on the bank near him, was a woman about sixty years of age, poorly but neatly clad, and engaged in lively talk with the old man, who was her father: another woman, many years younger, sat on the same bank, but she seemed to take but little interest in anything around her save one object—a lovely fair girl of about eighteen, who half reclined on the ground, her back resting against the trunk of a magnificent oak which overhung the bank, and carefully guarded from the risk of cold by several cloaks and shawls which were disposed around her. There was a look in her eye, a something in the demeanour of this sweet young creature, which but too plainly betokened that her race was nearly run, that the years she had already passed were all, or nearly all, she would know of the joys or sorrows of earth. She was exquisitely lovely; her complexion of a brilliant transparency; her form slight and fragile, yet scarcely as yet attenuated; and her hair a maze of lustrous golden curls, which would not be restrained, but strayed from the fillets that vainly strove to retain their glittering prey, and were lightly scattered on her cheek and fair white throat.

The party thus assembled were the sole surviving members of four generations, the aged man being the great-grandfather of the young girl. They were all as closely banded together in affection as by the ties of blood, and the love and unity of old William Maul and his family were proverbial in the village: he had been born there, and so had his daughter, his granddaughter, and his great-granddaughter, and he had lived there all his life. But now the youngest and dearest of the household band was setting out on her homeward journey, and it seemed but too probable that she would attain the goal before her aged relative, whose years numbered eighty-five. Mercy Grey's story was one, alas! too common in the present day, yet not the less touching. Her mother, the only child of the good old blind man's only daughter, Mary Maul, had married a soldier, who had been killed at the siege of Corunna a few months after their marriage, leaving his wife the mother of a new-born infant: this infant was the joy of the widow's life; she named her Mercy, 'Because,' said she, 'God has been very good in giving me such a blessing to comfort my widowed heart; and the little one grew up as lovely in mind as in outward form—a child of the highest promise. There was a grace about everything little Mercy Grey did that bespoke a native refinement of mind, and a readiness in acquiring

anything she attempted to learn, which shewed an intellect of higher range than ordinary. As Mercy increased in age, and her character developed, an intensity of feeling exhibited itself in her, and an ardour in pursuit of any object that interested her, which often made her mother, who was a woman of much observation and clear judgment, tremble for the happiness of her precious child. Mercy was early sent to the village school, and soon distinguished herself beyond her fellows. The poor child, whose heart was so wholly wrapped up in her mother, that she could scarcely bear the necessary separation from her that would enable her to attend to her school duties, was, nevertheless, so earnestly bent on making progress, and attaining to a position which should enable her to provide that cherished parent with greater comforts than she now enjoyed, that she pressed onwards in pursuit of learning with an energy almost beyond her strength; and she succeeded in attaining her object. Presenting herself at fifteen as a candidate for a pupil-teacher's situation, she stood so good an examination that the post was awarded her, with high encomiums from the examiners; and the sum of £10 for the first year, and £15 for the second, was now at her disposal, with which she might assist her family.

But the immense amount of study and exertion required to enable her to fulfil her duties as teacher, and to stand the personal examination necessary for holding her place, was too much for her. One day in the early spring of the year, she had walked rather faster than usual to the school, and was engaged in leading her class in their singing, when her clear sweet voice suddenly stopped, never again to be raised on earth in the hymn of praise; and the crimson spots and stains on the handkerchief which she raised to her lips shewed to the distressed children what had occurred. Poor Mercy was laid on the bed of the schoolmistress, who loved her as her own child, and the terrified mother was summoned to see her darling prostrated, apparently on the bed of death. For some weeks the poor child's life seemed as if it would fleet away each hour that passed; but she was spared a little longer: the summer warmth relieved her symptoms, and she rallied so rapidly, that hope once more entered the heart of her mother. It was now many months since the rupturing of the blood-vessel, and Mercy could walk about and perform some of the lighter offices in her home, and she had longed once more to witness the festival in which she had so often been amongst the foremost to dance in the ring, and gather nuts and berries from the copse; she longed, too, to see the children of her class, in whom she had taken so much pride and pleasure, all in their full enjoyment, and so she had persuaded her mother to let her be taken to the field; and there she rested, her sweet calm smile assuring those who looked at her, that although her spring of youth and bodily strength were gone for ever, yet there were joy and peace within. It was pleasant to see the little ones whom she had taught flocking round her, and bringing each her little offering of berries, or nuts, or flowers, to the sick young teacher; and it was pleasant to see the aged come and speak a few words to her who they felt would precede even them to the other world. It was pleasant, also, to see the young village-girls, her former companions, gather round and look at her with softened glances of affection, and with almost tearful eyes. But there were no tears in Mercy's eyes, no gloom was on her brow, she was as bright and cheerful in aspect as the most healthy there; warmly interested in watching the gambols of her children, ready with a friendly greeting and pleasant smile for each who approached her, and looking sad only when she caught a glimpse of her beloved mother's anxious and careworn countenance, and felt that she was sorrowing.

But there was one, whom I could not choose but watch, who had, unseen, drawn near that group, and

now stood silent and still, with his eye fixed on the invalid. I knew something of his history, for I was often in communication with his excellent old father, Dr Beaumont's schoolmaster, and I knew that he was expected to be there that day. He was a young man; his capacious forehead and open countenance indicative of both a fine mind and a tender heart; but I read in the sad and mournful glance of his eye a tale of sorrow. He loved Mercy Grey, loved her with intensity of feeling, and had done so from her childhood. He had not spoken of his love, but had wisely waited until he had obtained some situation which would authorise him to seek her as his wife. He had at length done this, having for a year past been master of a respectable school in a distant parish, and he was now come, full of hope and affection, to ask her for her love—to ask her to share his home and his comparative wealth. Gerald and Mercy had not met since the day of the feast in the preceding year—then in that very field he had last seen her, and in parting from her had first felt how deeply he loved her. She was then in the full glow of health and beauty; now, how did he find her! He had heard, indeed, of her illness, but also of her recovery, and had vainly believed and hoped that it was complete; but the first sight of her was enough to shew him at once her real state, enough to crush the heart of the strong man, and wither every blossom of hope that was within him. Unseen by her he loved, he stood struggling with his grief until he should have strength to address her. In a few minutes he had conquered his emotion sufficiently to make his presence known. The quick flush on the cheek of the dying girl shewed that had life been before her she would gladly have spent it with Gerald Morgan. Yet the sweet frankness of her manner, and the placidity with which she received his greeting, made me at once feel that earthly things had no longer hold over her; and I rejoiced that she and Gerald had not been betrothed, that no acknowledged tie was between them to render her parting with life more painful. But I must not thus linger over the remembrance of that sweet girl's last appearance amongst us, for such I feel it was.

The scenes of this happy evening were now near their close; for autumnal evenings, even when lighted by the harvest-moon, do not give much scope for prolonged enjoyment in the open air. It was six o'clock, and the well-known signal for all to gather round the wagon was now given by the band's striking up the national anthem, *God save the Queen*; for our good doctor always closed his parties, whether for the poor or the rich, by giving honour where honour is due, and recognising as well the earthly as the heavenly sovereign. As the beautiful anthem proceeded, the whole party, men, women, and children, gathered from all quarters around the laden wagon, and at its close more than a hundred voices might be heard chanting the well-known chorus. The vicar then mounted the wagon, and standing erect by the flag which floated above the fine load of golden grain, addressed a few words of exhortation to his people, reminding them of the mercy of God in thus blessing their labours with a good increase, and, as on a former occasion, called on them, before parting, to join in a hymn of praise, selecting these, with a village congregation, favourite verses of the sixty-fifth psalm, which speak of the gifts of plenty; a proposition which was welcomed by the people, who sang it with wonderful vigour, repeating the last lines—

The valleys bring
A plenteous crop of full-eared corn,
And seem for joy to shout and sing—

more than once or twice. This merry-making then closed with a loud cheer for the vicar and his family; after which all, 'gentle and simple,' dispersed to their

homes, the more intimate friends of Dr Beaumont, among whom were my uncle's family, returning to take tea at the vicarage: and so ended the Feast of the Ingathering.

HOW BOGS ARE TURNED INTO CANDLES.

It would, we feel sure, startle the majority of Irish tourists they were told, when travelling through the vast bog districts in Ireland, that those dark and dreary places may before long be converted into shining lights, which will go forth to irradiate the halls of beauty. And were it not that chemistry is a marvellous worker, in comparison with whose magic wand, that wielded by the astrologer of old was a contemptible affair, scepticism, if not entire disbelief, might very naturally follow such an announcement. But the chemist is a mighty man. At his bidding, substances disclose properties and assume appearances stranger than the wildest dreams could imagine. And it is one of his special qualities and triumphs, that by combinations which may almost be pronounced endless, he is enabled to make his knowledge applicable to the most useful purposes. One of these high achievements has been accomplished within the last few years. Dropping metaphor, candles of the most exquisite transparency, rivaling the best wax-lights in brilliancy of combustion, have been produced from the bogs of Ireland; and so successfully has the experiment answered, that works on a very large scale have just commenced operations, which, it is confidently expected, will realise a good profit, and be of great benefit to that part of Ireland where they are situated.

Before giving some account of these works, which is the principal purpose of this paper, it is desirable to say a few words respecting the nature of bogs. These Irish fuel-mines—for hitherto it is as fuel they have been chiefly valuable—are estimated to occupy about 2,900,000 English acres. They differ much in their exterior nature, being sometimes soft and spongy, and sometimes firm and hard. But in one respect they are similar, for they all contain a mass of a peculiar substance called peat, of the average thickness of twenty-five feet, nowhere less than twelve, and never exceeding forty-two. This substance varies materially in its appearance and properties, in proportion to the depth at which it lies, the upper portion containing vegetable fibres, visible, though much decomposed; while below, the colour of the peat changes from light brown to black, and the substance is much more compact, assuming the appearance, when dry, of pitch or bituminous coal, having a conchoidal fracture in every direction, with a black shining lustre, and being capable of receiving a high polish.

Now, chemists long ago informed us that, by proper chemical combination, peat might be made to yield sulphate of ammonia, acetate of lime, naphtha, paraffine, and oil; and they further state, that paraffine is an admirable substance for making candles. Dr Ure, in his well-known *Dictionary of Arts and Manufactures*, emphatically asserts this, and, when we see what paraffine is, the truth of the statement will be evident. Turning to *Brand's Chemistry*, we read, under this head: 'When beech-tar is distilled, three liquids pass into the recipient—1. A light oil; 2. An aqueous acid; 3. A heavy oil. The heavy oil is subjected to several redistillations, and then sulphuric acid is gradually added to it, till the mixture becomes a black and thin liquid; and if it does not spontaneously rise in temperature to 212 degrees, it is to be heated up to that point; the mixture is then kept for twelve hours or more, at a temperature of about 122 degrees, when a colourless oil will be found floating upon its surface. This is to be carefully poured off, and on

cooling, paraffine concretes upon its surface. This has to be purified by solution in hot anhydrous alcohol, when it appears a crystalline, tasteless, and odourless substance, fusing at 112 degrees into a transparent oily liquid, and burning with a white sootless flame. Its specific gravity is 0.870.'

We may add, that this curious substance derives its name from *parum affinis*, on account of its inertness as a chemical agent, or want of affinity, resisting the action of acids and alkalis. It, however, readily dissolves in oil of turpentine and in naphtha.

According to Guy Lussac, who made several experiments with paraffine, it is a binary compound of carbon and hydrogen.

From this account, it is evident, that if peat can be made to yield paraffine at a remunerative profit, a new and vast field of commercial enterprise is at once opened. As to the feasibility of the undertaking, no doubt exists. The writer has seen large blocks of paraffine, of the most beautiful crystalline appearance, procured from peat. The only question was, whether it could be manufactured at a remunerative cost. This result, after a long and laborious series of experiments, has been realised. At least, Mr Reece, the intelligent and scientific manager of the works we are about to give some account of, has been so well satisfied with the success of his experiments, that machinery to the amount of nearly £40,000 has been erected in the county of Kildare, on the verge of one of the largest bogs in that part of Ireland, for the purpose of extracting paraffine from peat.

The works, which are called the Irish Peat-works, are situated about eight miles from Monastereven, and four from Athy. The railway from Dublin to Athy passes close to the gates, and affords easy facility for visiting the works. The writer approached them from Monastereven. The road is monotonous enough, passing across tracts of dreary moorland, on the verge of which may yet be seen the genuine Irish squatter in all his unreclaimed misery. Happily, the disagreeable and melancholy spectacle of these human earth-grubbers is becoming every year more and more rare in Ireland, and the day is assuredly not far distant when the Irish squatter will no longer disfigure the face of the country. On reaching the works, which are visible from a great distance, we were fortunate in finding Mr Reece at home, and he at once kindly undertook to go with us over the establishment. Visitors, however, are not an everyday occurrence.

The first thing that strikes the eye is a huge furnace, or rather a row of furnaces, there being four side by side. They are similar in form to those used for smelting iron-ore, but are considerably larger, each furnace being capable of consuming no less than twenty-five tons of peat in eighteen hours. When filled, the top of the furnace is closed, and a fierce hot-blast being driven through the mass of turf, the smoke escapes through a pipe near the top, which terminates in a condenser. The magnitude of this apparatus may be estimated by the fact, that it will contain 8,000,000 cubic feet of gas. Here the first change in the conversion of peat into paraffine occurs, the smoke being condensed and precipitated in the form of tar. The lighter or gaseous portion is conducted by pipes to another locality.

It has been ascertained that 100 tons of peat will yield as much tar as will produce about 350 pounds of paraffine and 300 gallons of oil. But to obtain the paraffine, many delicate chemical operations are requisite, and for a long time it could not be extracted without using ether, which made the process far too costly for commercial purposes. At length—for what will not chemistry achieve?—Mr Reece discovered a less expensive mode of proceeding, which is at the same time fully as efficacious. Sulphuric acid is the principal agent employed: the tar being boiled for

about half an hour with 3 per cent. of this acid, it becomes decomposed, and all its impurities fall to the bottom of the vessel. Oil and paraffine now remain, which, after undergoing the process of distillation, separate. The paraffine then appears in crystalline flakes, but is of so dark a colour, and emitting such an unpleasant odour, as to be quite unfit for use. It is therefore necessary to bleach and to deodorise it, which are effected by subjecting it to the action of chloro-chromic acid; and finally, after another process of distillation, and passing through powerful hydraulic presses and steam, it comes out clear and perfect paraffine.

It is quite impossible to look at this beautiful substance, and witness its combustion, bearing in mind how it is obtained, without feelings of admiration and wonder, and particularly when we remember that it is derived from a black and apparently foul mass. Nor must it be supposed that when the paraffine is extracted, all that remains is valueless: quite the contrary is the case; for, independently of oils from which is generated gas, used as fuel for the steam-engines and other purposes, several valuable commercial and agricultural products are obtained.

It will be readily understood, that four such huge fiery furnaces as we have described require a great supply of food to keep them going. To meet this demand, canals to the extent of five miles have been cut through the neighbouring bog; and it is estimated that about 200 persons will be kept constantly employed in cutting and conveying the turf to its destination.

At the proposed rate of consumption, vast as is the area of the bog near the works, it will be exhausted in the course of a few years. This, however, will not affect the establishment, as there are other large bogs in the neighbourhood; and it must not be forgotten, that one of the advantages held out is, that the very destruction of the bog will develop a soil available for the purposes of the agriculturist.

We trust that the beautiful chemical operations which are now about to be carried out in a practical form, will answer the expectations of the company to whom the works belong. It is a good and healthy sign, that no advertising puffing has been used to dispose of the shares, which, we are informed, have been taken up mostly by practical men. This augurs well for the success of the undertaking; and we hope soon to see the fitful Will-o'-the-Wisp which haunts Irish bogs spirited, by the chemist's potent wand, into the substantial reality of brilliant candles.

BOOKS OF THE HOUR.

THE world knows that press and pen are busy—the trade itself marvels over the amount of printed paper passing through its hands. What the printers think, has not been definitively stated; neither is it yet ascertained whether writers or readers are the most numerous among us; but the time predicted by this Journal—once when the spirit of prophecy came strong upon it—in which it will be a social distinction to have written nothing, seems rapidly approaching. Whether this good time will commence with '54 or its successor, let Zadkiel determine; our prophetic reputation cannot be so lightly risked; but there are some questions on the subject of book-making which, having long puzzled our own minds, we would submit to a discerning public.

Who knows, in these investigating times, when life's corner-closets are rummaged up, and lights and dusters go through all the lumber-rooms of time, but some ingenious soul or souls might bend their energies in the direction we indicate—who knows but even some of the initiated might, in authorized phrase, 'let the

cat out,' and earn our gratitude, if not our secrecy? Let us premise, then, that we have some knowledge of composition in most of its branches, our—doubtless adverse—fortune having made us acquainted with such matters for many a year. On the subjects of 'getting up and pushing,' we have a sort of general information, mysterious as these terms may seem to the simple; but by what process those thick and heavy volumes which appear on every topic of the passing hour are written, made, or put together, we are willing to be instructed.

Scarcely do the newspapers, or their noble friend the electric telegraph, set club and coffee-house fairly a talking on question, event, or individual, when out come histories that unfold the by-gones of the subject—essays enlarging on its philosophy, and novels overflowing with its romance. We know paste and scissors, but they will not account for these things. It is our conviction that great exertions may be made in the cramming line; but there is such a combination of ingenuity and haste requisite for this peculiar manufacture, as makes it our standing wonder. The rumour of an insurrection in the heart of old China does not well reach us, before narratives of residences in Hong-Kong, cruises in the Chinese Sea, and sketches of life on the Canton River, cover every bookseller's counter, and fill our advertising sheets. Diplomatic difficulties between the Czar and the Sultan bring forth annals of Russia from the earliest emperor, travels in the Danubian provinces, Turkish tales and journeys from St Petersburg to Siberia. Of pamphlets, tracts, and magazine articles, we take no account; but these volumes in boards and cloth—what manner of men are their authors?

Ingenious people have conjectured that there might be a steam-engine at work somewhere in the British Museum, which produced them by a process known only to its own directors. Our opinion is not in favour of that lucid explanation. The British Museum may have some relation to the work, and the greater part of it is certainly done in London; but steam has not advanced quite so far. It helps to print and bind. It makes most of our pens and paper, but the veriest outskirt of authorship still lies beyond its reach. Within that vast domain, however, there are those that seem somehow related to the engine, born and gifted, no doubt, for these rapid times, on whom the genius of enlargement and fluency has expended all her stores. Where scholars, philosophers, and poets would fail, these men of words succeed. Slenderness of materials is with them no impediment to 600 pages. We remember—it is long ago—being on business in a printing-office where a genius of this order who dealt in extreme novels sat, as was his wont, correcting proofs, when the printer informed him that the concluding chapter of his second volume was some pages short.

'What is the last of it about?' said the novelist, still correcting.

'Lord Lionel going out with his wolf-dog,' replied the printer.

'Ha! that's a good subject; bring me some paper,' and, to our astonishment, he filled the required pages with Lord Lionel's wolf-dog. To the best of our recollection, two pages and a half were occupied with its ears, one and three-quarters exactly with its tail, and almost five were devoted to the courage, sagacity, and faithfulness of the 'noble quadruped.' There was here a promptitude and facility not to be attained by every worker in the world of letters. We doubt whether Scott or Southey could have done it, for all their voluminous years; but various are the talents lent to mortals. Dumas requires but one week for a five-act comedy; and Napoleon the First, as they call him now in France, used to say of Fesch, that he 'could write six pages on a foundation no bigger than the point of a needle.' To such ready writers, the world owes its books of the hour; and these, beyond question,

the world finds useful. They help the current of trade; they distract no reader's attention from day-book or dinner; and they pass easily to the trunk-maker. Seriously, such books ought to be reckoned among the conveniences of the age, and, in some sense, also, among its exponents. To the populace of our day, they are what the broadside ballad or tract was to those of earlier generations. Moreover, they illustrate the whole art and mystery of book-making as known in the middle of the nineteenth century. Succeeding ages may improve upon it—for who shall limit progress in anything?—but there is a liberal-mindedness evinced in pressing matters into the service which posterity may imitate, though it can scarcely surpass: for instance, travels in Asia Minor will conclude with a survey of the state and prospects of the Rothereschildes; a romance of the Danube will wind off into the woes of somebody in Birkenhead; and an essay on the Eastern question be eked out with the report of a meeting at Exeter Hall.

Campbell used to tell the story of a rapid author, who, when public interest was at its height regarding the siege of Warsaw in 1831, had undertaken to write, for a certain publisher within a fortnight, a history of Poland, of course from the foundation of the monarchy. The gentleman's information was limited as well as his time; but he contrived to get up a substantial manuscript by copying an entire article from the *British Encyclopedia*, giving a minute account of all that was done, said, and expended by a reduced Prince of the Poniatowski family with whom he had once scraped acquaintance in Paris, and inserting the lives of three notable Polish dwarfs. Nevertheless, there is a difference in books of the hour as regards both quantity and quality. It has been observed that the continental revolutions of 1848, although sympathised in by a large portion of the British public, gave comparatively few books to the trade; while the Duke of Wellington's decease called forth a greater number of volumes than any single event in late years. Next in numbers come the paraphrases and abridgments of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; but the Australian gold-diggings seem to have engaged by far the best literature in their service. Few productions that in their nature belong to passing events and interests are worthy to live beyond them; yet ever since the press began its work in Europe, some have escaped that general doom, because of the salt that never loses its savour. The *Draper's Letters* have long survived William Wood and his patent for copper coinage, against which Swift wrote them. Much older works of the kind might be quoted; but, strange to say, these outliners of their times are all against something, and perhaps among their numerous congeners yet written or read by our own generation, those that have appeared against Louis Napoleon will be found the most enduring, because the cleverest books of the hour.

TO BE CONTINUED.

SOME time ago, I had occasion to consult a dentist—not in an agony of toothache, to implore the extraction of the offending member, but, be it confessed, to get some of the ravages of time repaired by substitution. I was shewn into a drawing-room—a perfect museum of curiosities, of which the selection had evidently been prompted by no one peculiar bent of mind; they had been procured just as they occurred to the purchaser, and neatly placed here to amuse patients in waiting. Every variety of taste, one would think, might meet with something interesting; but, being little of a virtuoso, I was satisfied with a passing survey, and sat down to look over the periodical literature, which lay in similar abundance and variety on the table. A promising story caught my eye; I began to read it with avidity, became deeply interested, hoped the dentist would not soon be disengaged—when, lo! it

broke off with, 'To be continued.' I had not calculated upon this, and I was grievously disappointed, provoked—as angry, in short, as I ought to be. Tossing the book on the table, I called it catchpenny, and declared—to myself—that if the publisher's shop were at my elbow, and the half-pence in my pocket, I would not—no, I would not buy the next number; I would deny myself, and stifle my curiosity, rather than encourage such trickery. Then it was a consolation to think that the story was fictitious, of course, and I was quite at liberty to finish it according to my own fancy—at least to settle the points which it was desirable to have happily cleared up. Well, but most of these fictions are founded on fact; and one would like to know how the events in question turned out, if they did really happen. No—the single incidents only are facts, but the labyrinthine plot is the author's invention; nature, indeed—historic nature—often furnishes single events stranger than those of the novelist; but there is no such thing in real life as this complication of incidents, combining in this regular, artistic, half-veiled, half-revealed method to bring about a dénouement. 'No such thing,' added I to myself, 'as a history cut short with this hateful "To be continued." Stay—is there not occasionally something worse?—a glimpse of a romance afforded, a mystery permitted to tempt the curiosity, and no dénouement supplied, even at a future time? Have I not myself sometimes caught sight of the beginning, middle, or end of an interesting tissue of facts, and been unable to get at the rest? Has not historic nature sometimes been less kind than the novelist who clears up everything in succeeding numbers? Has she not sometimes broken off a story I was perusing, without adding the hopeful announcement, "To be continued?"'

Thus far I had reflected, and my wrath somewhat abated, when Mr Wrencher was announced as ready for consultation; and the matter-of-fact business of forcing the teeth into a lump of warm wax, proved efficacious in dispelling the visions of fancy, and destroying the last vestige of my interest in the mutilated story. But memory insisted on vindicating the story-teller, by recalling some real histories that had balked my curiosity in by-gone days.

It reminded me first of walking one day in the high street of a large town in Ireland, when my attention was attracted by a respectable-looking female, having the appearance of a comfortable housewife, attended by a maid with a basket, as though they had been on an errand to the market, which was just at hand. She was evidently in great alarm and agitation—her face flushed, and her walk hurried. Suddenly, she started, and said: 'There he is again! what shall I do?'

Whereupon a low blackguard-looking fellow walked up to her: 'It's no use humbugging; I'll not quit you, and you my lawful wife.'

'I tell you I am not your wife. I don't know you—never saw you in my life.'

'Well, now, Mary, and is it yourself can look me in the face and say that?'

The people who were passing began to stand, as I myself did, at a little distance, and the lady exclaimed: 'Is there no police at hand? Will nobody protect me against this man?'

'Oh, there,' cried one, pointing to a tall young man crossing an adjoining street—'there's Mr Causewell, the stipendiary magistrate.'

The lady begged he might be called, and he quickly obeyed. Advancing, and raising his hat, he asked with the grace and gallantry of a true Irish gentleman, what he could do for her.

'Plase yer honour,' interrupted the man, 'she's my lawful wedded wife.'

'I'm not his wife,' said the lady: 'I never saw the man before.'

'It's the truth I'm telling yer honour, and ne'er a word of a lie,' persisted the man.

'Why, this is a strange thing,' said the magistrate, 'that such a fellow as you, whatever you may once have been'—and he eyed him from head to foot, as if to search for some trace of better days—'that such as you should claim a lady of this appearance in the public street, while she denies all knowledge of you. Madam, I will not ask you a single question here; it is no place for explanation'—the crowd was gathering closer—'but you will kindly accompany me to the police-office, which is just at hand, and this man shall come in charge of an officer. Here,' said he to a policeman, 'bring him to the office, and I'll take charge of the lady.'

They proceeded in perfect silence, the magistrate with the lady on one side of the street, the officer with the man on the other; while we, whose interest had been excited, were speculating on the event. If there was no foundation for the man's assertion, why did she not say who and what she was, and defy him to follow her home? But, on the other hand, she did not look like one that had lightly forsaken one protector for another. Her plain, substantial, respectable appearance, and modest demeanour, were *prima facie* evidence in her favour. It was of no use guessing: Mr Causewell would elicit a full explanation. But as soon as they entered the office, the door was closed after them; and when the lady reappeared, it was to enter a covered car, which drove her rapidly away. The man must have got out by another door. It was said that both were bound over to appear next morning; but whatever the nature of the investigation, it was strictly private; and the story of this singular rencontre was not 'to be continued' for the gratification of public curiosity.

A few years further back. One summer Sunday evening, I went to service in a church which I did not usually attend. Immediately beneath the reading-desk there was a large semicircular pew, which was appropriated to the incumbent, but which he did not use otherwise than to place it at the service of such of his friends as might be only occasional attendants. I was one of these, and on the evening in question the pew was pretty full. Prayers were read by a singularly interesting-looking young man. His countenance might be pronounced beautiful, beaming as it was with the enthusiasm of one to whom the sacred office was new and delightful. There was not a line of weakness about those fine features, but great simplicity of expression, bespeaking him fresh from his home and his books, little hackneyed in the ways of the world, and entering with zeal and ardour upon his holy vocation. I had read all this in his countenance and manner ere he had got through the opening exhortation, and had taken with me the recollection that, as Dublin College does not require residence, it might be even as I thought. After a little while, his attention seemed to have fastened on a young lady in this same pew; he never looked from his book but to look at her: and he had not the art to conceal, at least from me who sat so near, that his interest was greatly excited. She was a slim, lady-like girl, apparently about eighteen. I could not distinctly scan her delicate features, but I thought if the lines of goodness were traced on them as unmistakably as they were on his, it was little wonder he was attracted. As for her, she seemed to be minding nothing but her devotions, and seldom looked up; perhaps she was conscious of meeting his eyes every time she did so, and that might have rivetted hers the more closely on her book. When Dr Brown retired to prepare for the pulpit, the young man did not accompany him, as is usual; he remained standing in the desk, joining in the psalmody, and fixedly gazing at the young lady. When I raised my head at the conclusion of the service, he was standing stock-still half-way down the stairs, as if waiting till she rose from her knees. When she did so, he hurried away to the vestry, and by the time

we were half-a-dozen yards from the church, he was at her side. She seemed conscious of it, and embarrassed; tried to quicken her pace, but could not, for almost the whole congregation had to travel on one narrow footpath, and we were among the last. I kept close behind; this was surely the beginning of a romantic episode; the young clergyman was certainly smitten; I would see whether he watched her home. Presently a light shower came on—so light that not half of those who had umbrellas put them up. The young man now broke silence. 'Would you like an umbrella?' said he, offering his to the young lady.

'Thank you; I have one,' she replied, producing that which she held in the other hand.

Like an arrow from a bow, he darted to the other side of the street, and fairly ran down the first turning in an opposite direction, nor stopped, nor stayed, nor looked back till he was out of sight. Did he ever see her again? I never learned. The thing looked like a bit of romance well begun, but not 'to be continued.'

Further back still to recall a scene of early childhood. Forty or fifty years ago, the merchants of London lived not as now, in suburban villas, and squares, and terraces, but in courts, opening off the busy streets of the city. Those who are familiar with the life of Samuel Johnson and his metropolitan contemporaries, are quite at home in imagination with Bolt Court, Crane Court, and others in that quarter—the literary one in those days—while some may even require to be informed that a court in London is a short street without any thoroughfare. The earliest home I remember was in such a court. Ours was the furthest house, and we had no opposite neighbours but the dead; the other side being bounded by the parish church-yard, which formed our front view. Behind, we had a paved yard, which was screened from the view of the dining-room windows by a conservatory, or green-house, as it was then called, filled with exotic plants. One could scarcely imagine it possible to enjoy a residence so quiet and secluded within five minutes' walk of London Bridge. Perhaps it may be thought it was melancholy too, looking out upon a church-yard; but it seemed not so to my childish fancy. We rather welcomed the approach of a funeral procession, as it afforded the only variety, the only thing like life that was ever to be seen from our nursery windows. We did not think of the sadness of death, or the grief of the relatives; probably nobody had ever reminded us of it: we gathered round the windows, and opened all our ears with childish solicitude, to ascertain whether the white-robed priest designated the departed a 'brother' or a 'sister,' the maid having taught us to consider this a point of great importance. Of course it was a ruse of hers, to induce us to forego our noisy play, and maintain the decorous silence which became the occasion; and truly it answered the purpose, to the saving of a world of scolding and lecturing. No, it was not the church-yard, it was the pretty green-house that saddened the days of my childhood.

One night, as my parents were retiring to rest, they heard a heavy crash, and almost at the same moment, a fearful cry between a shriek and a groan. My father rang the bell—asked if any one had fallen out of bed—despatched the servant to inquire in the room where my elder sisters slept with their governess, and himself hastened to the nursery. But all was right. Again a groan—there must be some stranger about the house; he returned to his room for pistols. With one of these in one hand, and a candle in the other, he began resolutely to search the house, closely attended by my mother, who, though in a situation of extreme delicacy, would not allow him to go alone. The first thought was of the spare bedroom, where a good deal of plate was lying open—for we had had a dinner-party that day, and the things which were used only for company had been put there, to await the morrow's cleaning and

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locking-up. There was no one there; no trace of an intruder; but the window, which had been fastened within the last half-hour, was wide open.

'There must be robbers about the house; will one of you call a watchman?' said my father to the trembling domestics who crept behind; but one and all declared they would not stir for any consideration. 'Must I go myself?' said he.

'O no,' exclaimed my mother; 'you cannot leave us unprotected: I would rather go myself than stay behind with these helpless children and cowardly women.' So off she would go, just as she was, in her dressing-gown and slippers, though it was mid-winter—down the court into the street, calling: 'Watch! watch!' at the top of her voice. A watchman was soon found, and the search of the house was continued. Nothing was seen to account for what had been heard till they entered the green-house, and there indeed lay a man overhead, moaning low and piteously. The great difficulty was how to reach him; and at length the large ironing-board was put out of the nearest window and gently laid on the glass, by which means it was found possible to bring in the dying wretch.

'Who are you, and what were you about?' demanded the watchman.

A feeble groan of 'O Mr Malcolm!' was the only response.

'For Heaven's sake, who are you?' cried my father, hearing himself thus appealed to.

'Tell us your name, or I'll shoot you!' added the watchman.

'Robinson.' It was the son of the merchant who lived next door.

'And, my poor fellow,' said my father, 'what were you doing?' Another groan, and he was gone. A surgeon was instantly sent for; but he could do nothing except pronounce that the vertebral column had been broken in the neck, and that all was over. Moreover, as he was acquainted next door, he was thought the most proper person to go in and communicate with the family.

The sisters of the ill-fated young man were sitting up for their father, who had dined out, and was not yet home. After hearing the surgeon's recital, they proceeded with him and the watchman to the melancholy task of examining their brother's room. The bed had not been lain in—everything was as usual; but the dressing-closet was locked inside, and the keyhole stuffed with paper. The explorers burst open the door, and found the candle burning, and the window wide open. The young man had got out here on the house-top, over which he had scrambled to the back of our house, and, whether making for the spare bedroom window or not, had fallen right past it on the roof of the green-house. What his object might be, no one could make out. The surgeon, who remained with the young ladies, sounded and sifted them in vain. About two in the morning, the father came home, merry with wine. 'Ha, Mr Hooper, how d'ye do? Glad to see you, my good fellow.' The surgeon looked gravely and steadily at the thoughtless man. 'Ha—yes—true—something must be the matter—odd hour for you to be here.'

'Yes; your son, sir, has met with an accident.'

'Little wonder; the young rascal was always foolhardy; he'll break his neck some day. Nothing serious, doctor, I hope!'

We will not attempt to describe the sequel as Hooper described it to us; the fearful awakening of the father at once to perfect sobriety, and to the knowledge of what had befallen his son—his only son. The body was removed into the house: I never heard what amount of scrutiny took place at the coroner's inquest; it was probably huddled up with a verdict of 'Accidental death,' and no particulars reported. The relatives gave it out as a melancholy case of

sonnambulism, though it was evident the young man had not been in bed that night. We children were told it was a foolish frolic—he was going to frighten our maids by looking in at their attic window. My father would believe, and still does, that it was a plundering expedition, and that some accomplice in our house opened the window where the silver-plate was lying; but still the old gentleman adds with solemnity: 'It will never be known till the judgment-day.'

Probably some female of our household was in the fatal secret; but none had the weakness to betray it. No single gleam of light was ever shed on the story of that midnight visit. It was 'to be continued' indeed; but only in the sorrows which it entailed on our once happy family. The birth of a still-born infant; the protracted illness and subsequent death of our beloved mother; the dispersion of brothers and sisters who have never all met again—such was the continuation, and the only one, of poor young Robinson's story.

A PEEP INTO AN ITALIAN INTERIOR.

FIFTH ARTICLE.

By way of an agreeable contrast to the patrician associations which surrounded us, we used in our walks to take great interest in noticing the peasantry or *contadini* of the environs; and circumstances having protracted my stay beyond what was originally intended, I was enabled, when the lovely month of April invited us to longer excursions, to see a good deal of their primitive mode of life. The town being small, with scarcely any suburbs beyond the gates, a very few minutes were sufficient to transport one from the dark narrow streets to the open country, rich in its cultivation and fertility, and beautiful in its undulating hills, its towering cliffs, and broad expanse of sea. Never have I known spring more lovely than amid these scenes: the glad blue sky, the fair blossoms and budding foliage, the fields of young corn gently waving in the breeze, the sweet scent of the violets with which the roadside banks were thickly strewn; the sense of beauty, the voiceless music, beneath whose spell each tiny leaf and blade of grass seemed sparkling and harmonious; and, above all, the sea, the silvery sea, so still, so majestic, so sublime—the whole rises to my memory in all its fascination of sunshine, and colouring, and perfume.

No stranger approaching by the high road from Florence, which follows the curve of the bay, with the promontory on which Ancona is built stretching forth like a gigantic arm to impede his onward course, and forming the boundary of the prospect, can have an idea of the nature of the scenery which lies behind this barrier, and is perhaps unique in its combination of all the softest features of a pastoral region, with the lofty cliffs and sea-views of a grander landscape.

From the very gates, the land was laid out in small allotments or *possessioni*, each of barely a few acres in extent, planted with long rows of vines, intersected with patches of wheat, maize, and vegetables, that were studded with apple, peach, almond, and other fruit-trees. No barrier more formidable than a luxuriant hedge, a perfect wilderness of may-flowers, honeysuckles and dogroses, divided the *possessione* from the road; the entrance was by a gate of very simple construction, surmounted by an arch with an image of the Virgin. Like Little Red Riding-hood, all one had to do was to pull up the latch and walk forward—not into the jaws of a perfidious wolf, but up a pretty avenue of mulberry-trees, with vines trained in festoons along their branches. A rude well—so picturesque in its shape that it never failed to bring to my mind the representations of Jacob's meeting with Rachel—always stood in the foreground, while a little in the rear appeared the cottage of the occupants of the farm; these dwellings of stone, blackened by time, were comfortless and primitive in the

extreme, the windows unglazed, and the upper story accessible only by an uncovered staircase outside.

Two or three ragged little children were always at hand to carry news of a stranger's presence to their mother, who was perhaps tilling the ground at some little distance: the good woman soon made her appearance, barefooted, and carrying, admirably poised upon her head, a large pitcher of water, with another of equal size supported on her hip; in her other hand she bore the coarse broad-brimmed straw-hat which was in general her protection from the sun. Her costume consisted of a petticoat of scarlet and blue-striped cotton, with a bodice or stay of a different colour, from beneath which appeared the white sleeves of the shift, reaching to the elbow, where they were fastened in and terminated with a frill, much as is seen in engravings of Raphael's *Fornarina*; around the throat and shoulders was a handkerchief, so scrupulously adjusted as barely to disclose the coral necklace, without which even the poorest *contadina* would think her everyday attire incomplete. There was often much beauty in the face set off by this picturesque equipment, for however worn and sunburnt it might be, it could usually boast of jet-black tresses, dark vivacious eyes, well-cut features, and the whitest possible teeth. The welcome, too, was pleasing—no constraint, no bashfulness, but a straightforward hospitable simplicity, that won its way immediately to the heart. We were perfectly at liberty to come in and look about us, ask questions, and rest ourselves, and were secure of giving unbounded delight if, on coming away, we purchased fruit or eggs to the value of a few *baiochi*.

After one or two visits of this nature, we were quite on a footing of intimacy, and the mother and children would seat themselves round us, to indulge in a little conversation. If we chanced to come on a *festa*, or when the daily toil was over, the circle would be increased by the father and his grown-up sons, who, in their rough but not unmusical peasant dialect, plied me with inquiries about the country I came from, and its peculiarities, such as whether we had a moon there, and what the people ate. In a fashion they had all heard of England, as a wonderfully rich and large city; but its inhabitants being heathens, was what had principally impressed itself upon their minds, and awakened their regrets. In all that regarded themselves, they were very communicative; and in one possession especially, where the bond of union was cemented by their having supplied my uncle's household with milk for several years, they used to tell us of all their domestic concerns, from the courtship of Celestino, the eldest son, who was *promesso* to a neighbouring *contadina*, to the pearl earrings and necklace which Orsolina, a pretty laughing damsel, the only daughter of the family, had just received as a troth-plight from her affianced swain. I remember, as an instance of their perfect trust in us, that, after having displayed these valuables with a great deal of pride, the girl put the little pasteboard-box containing them into my cousin Lucy's hand, and proposed she should take them home to shew her sister, *l'altra signorina*, whom a trifling indisposition had confined to the house.

The frugality with which these peasants live is surprising, particularly when one sees what a fine hard-working race they really are. Their food consists in great measure of bread, made of equal proportions of ground beans and the flour of Indian corn, of which, every morning, all the members of the family are furnished with a supply before setting out on their different avocations. At noon, they assemble for dinner, which is of *polenta*—Indian corn-meal stirred into boiling water till it becomes about the consistency of thick oatmeal porridge; it is then poured out on wooden platters, and eaten with no other condiment than salt. Bread, and a moderate draught of wine—or, in summer, occasionally vinegar and water—complete the repast. In

the evening, they sup on bread and salad, or an onion, or fennel-root, or raw beans. Meat they never taste, except on Sundays or the great *feste*; and then it is in so small a quantity, and so boiled down by having been made into soup, that it cannot convey much nourishment. Singularly enough, they have a prejudice against milk; and when a cow is kept for the purpose of supplying the consumption of the town, they make no use of it themselves: in those cases where any is left upon their hands, it is always given to the pig.

In summer, when the labours of the day are at an end, they assemble on the thrashing-floor adjacent to the house, and dance to the music of a tambourine, which is played successively by the different members of the family; even children of six or seven years old often take their turn, and beat the rural instruments with great spirit and precision. Their national dance, called the *saltarello*, does not exhibit much variety of figure: the two performers stand facing each other, the woman holding her dress spread out, her partner with his hands in an easy attitude on his hips: thus prepared, they set off, advancing and retreating, doubling and pursuing, circling round and round each other, in a quick hopping sort of step, always keeping admirable time, and accompanying the music by a sort of hissing sound, which appears to have an exhilarating influence. As soon as one couple pause to take breath, another is ready to step forward; while the interest of the spectators and the animation of the dancers never seem to flag: sometimes the old people, the elders of the group, become so excited, that they start up, push aside the younger ones, and foot it away with a nimbleness and dexterity which call down general applause.

Their households are generally large, for, as the son grow up, they invariably marry, always in succession, according to their birthright, and bring their wives home to the paternal roof, unless one has a religious vocation and becomes a priest, or a lay-brother in some order of friars. As soon, however, as they become too numerous, the *padrone*, the owner of the land, steps in to say he will not have so many useless mouths upon his property; so then one at least of the junior branches is obliged to look out for another possession to cultivate.

The terms on which they hold these farms, and the system pursued between landlord and tenant, are very different from English usages. No rent is paid, but the produce is equally shared; the proprietor receives his half of everything in kind—so many measures of corn, so many jars of oil, and barrels of wine; nay, even to the vegetables and poultry daily brought into the market for sale, there is understood to be an exact division. It is looking after these petty details of their property, and regulating their multifarious accounts, which forms the occupation of the industrious nobles. Among the wealthiest of these proprietors, some own as many as fifty, sixty, or even 100 possessions, varying in size and value from L.30 or upwards yearly income to the possessor, down to those that do not yield him more than L.12 or L.14 clear profit; which last, however incredible it may seem, give support to a family of five or six in number on the premises. Of course, it cannot be supposed that the shares are very equitably divided; indeed, it is always considered that the fruit and vegetables daily consumed by the peasants are exclusive of this arrangement; but then, to counterbalance this, the *padrone* also has his perquisites, in a stipulated number of fat capons at Christmas, eggs and a lamb at Easter, and the choicest of the grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, quinces, &c., to be stored for winter use.

On the whole, a great deal of harmony between the two classes seems to prevail; the landlord is always consulted as to the marriage of any of the *contadina's* family, and is expected to grace their wedding and christening festivities with his presence, and to stand

Christenings, particularly that of the first child, are celebrated much in the same manner. We received an invitation to one in the spring at the house of some peasants, who were not personal friends, but who asked us out of compliment to a Polish lady, a patroness of theirs, who was to stand godmother, and with whom we were very intimate. As the ceremony always takes place the day following the birth of the child, we were apprised

of the event as soon as it occurred, and requested to hold ourselves in readiness at an early hour the following morning. We set out a merry party—our friend and her two daughters, my cousins and myself, besides the two ladies-maids of the establishments, friends or connections of our host's, wild with delight, yet never throughout the day transgressing the bounds of the strictest respect towards us. Outside the gates of the town, we found the *contadino*, all smiles and importance, with his *bircocio*—a primitive cart, rudely painted with heads of saints, wreathed with flaming red and yellow roses, and drawn by two white oxen—waiting to convey us to the scene of festivity. Here we also met the Conte M—, the young owner of the possessions, a perfect stranger to all of us, but who was to be associated in the sponsorial duties with Madame V—, or *la Consolessa*—as she was generally termed, in allusion to the official rank of her husband, who was consul for one of the northern powers. The introduction was soon effected by his tenant, in compliment to whom all superfluous etiquette seemed laid aside, and the count gallantly placed at our disposal his equipage—a very high, antiquated barouche, with a step like a ladder; to this vehicle was harnessed a cow, the hills we had to ascend being considered too steep for horses; and in it our friend, one of her daughters, myself, and the *padrone* were accommodated; while the rest of the party took their seats on two rough benches in the cart, which, by way of awning, had a sheet supported on four canes.

Our road lay through a lovely country, alternating from hill to vale, and at every ascent beautiful glimpses of sea varying the prospect. As we toiled slowly along, the *contadino* chiefly left his *bircocio* to the care of a little boy, and walking beside the carriage, devoted his attention to his landlord. Their conversation was very animated, and turned upon the state of the country, their prospects for the harvest, the hardship of being deprived of firearms by the Austrian general (the pontifical states were then under martial law), the consequent boldness of the robbers who infested the neighbourhood, and their inability to resist them; besides many other matters connected with their mutual interests. In about two hours' time, we arrived at the place of our destination, and the assembled friends came out to the gate to welcome us: there were all the nearest of kin on both sides, the fathers, the mothers, the brothers and sisters, besides others more remotely connected, and affording in their contrasts of old age and childhood, decrepitude and vigour, an admirable study of grouping and physiognomy.

The first stage of proceedings was to conduct us to the house, which was as rude and comfortless as most of its description, the ground-floor being shared between the silkworms and cows, and the upper story inhabited by the family being attainable only by a steep outer staircase. At the threshold we found some more venerable dames, by whom we were ushered—the *padrone* amongst the rest—to pay our respects to the young mother, who lay smiling in her bed, the tiny stranger by her side, all swathed and swaddled, and her gossips talking and chattering around her, or bustling to and from the kitchen, which adjoined her room, in utter violation of every orthodox rule of quiet and good nursing. From thence, as soon as we were considered sufficiently rested, we were marshalled for the christening—a little girl of twelve years old, the *contadino's* sister, carrying the baby, and the rest all following in order. It was then, as we went along, that the terrible fact of our being heretics began to transpire, and I was amused at the pitying interest with which we were surveyed: on entering the village church, in particular, when it was remarked we took no holy-water, nor crossed ourselves, we overheard one old woman whisper to her cronies: 'Peccato, non sono Cristiane!' and the little children, clinging to their grandams' skirts,

peered at us inquisitively with their glorious black eyes gleaming through the tangled golden hair which hung about them like a mane.

The church was built in the shape of a Latin cross, with no pretensions to architectural merit or high antiquity; the walls whitewashed, and with no ornaments beyond the crucifixes, candlesticks, and vases of artificial flowers upon the principal altar at the upper end, and in the two small chapels or recesses at either side, in which also mass could be celebrated. Two confessionals, a few benches, and a number of rush-bottomed chairs piled in a corner, completed the fittings-up, if we except three large pictures, of which one was suspended over each altar: they were in oils, evidently originals, and of no modern date, though from a very inferior hand—some unpromising follower, perhaps, of the Caracci or Domenichino; for it is from the school of Bologna that the paintings found in the environs of Ancona seem principally to have been supplied. The subjects were the Crucifixion, the Assumption of the Virgin, and the Virgin as a child tending some lilies which grew up miraculously beneath her touch. In the same chapel as this last, and immediately beneath it, so placed that the frame, which was surmounted with a wreath of flowers, should incline considerably forward, was a very small discoloured head of the Madonna, as Mater Dolorosa, her hands clasped, holding a heart, from whence seemed to proceed flames of fire. A lamp was burning before this, and a number of votive hearts and crosses were fastened around: these, one of the old men, while we were waiting for the *curato*, informed me were all offerings which had been made in return for miracles that Madonna had performed. He had known of pilgrimages made here which were almost as efficacious as to the shrine of Loretto. He looked wistfully at me as he said this, and slipping away soon after, I saw him kneeling before the picture with an expression of such unmistakable fervour in his upturned face, that I felt persuaded he was praying heart and soul for our rescue from perdition.

As soon as the priest, who had been detained some little time in the sacristy, made his appearance, the ceremony was performed, and then the baby was handed round to receive the greetings of its sponsors and ourselves, on which occasion, he it said, a convenient opportunity was afforded for slipping a slight donation amongst the swatches with which the hapless infant was encumbered; after which all the relations pressed forward, and men as well as women kissed the little creature, as they termed it, with great affection, and carried it back in triumph to the mother, who forthwith hung a bag of relics round its neck.

I should be guilty of insincerity if I concealed that the two hours which intervened before the banquet were somewhat wearying. It was too hot to walk out, nor was there any shade in the possessions; we had exhausted our little topics of conversation with our hostess, who was, besides, much occupied with her son; and no resource appeared but to sit in the apartment where the cloth was being laid with indescribable clatter both of plates and tongues—a very small room on the other side of the kitchen, furnished with a table and benches, from which the bed had been removed for the occasion—or to walk into the kitchen itself, and contemplate the preparations for dinner.

Our party had been increased by the young *curato*, the son of a neighbouring *contadino*, who seemed rather agitated at the presence of so many ladies, and apparently looked for countenance and protection to the count, who having but recently returned from completing his education at an ecclesiastical seminary, had not yet learned to manifest that utter contempt for the priestly office which the youth of Italy generally display. Madame V—, who had a great respect for all spiritual authority, also hastened to the rescue, and

engaged the poor priest in a conversation about his parishioners and the state of his church, on which he talked very fluently; but unfortunately, on her proceeding to tell him of various missions to Madagascar and China, in which she took great interest, he shewed himself so completely at fault, apparently considering she alluded to some towns in the Turkish dominions, that she hastened to change the subject, to prevent our discovering any further deficiencies. Meantime the count, who, by the by, was not a very brilliant specimen of the Anconitan *gioventù*, acquitted himself of his arduous duties with tolerable ease, notwithstanding that the trammels of his education still hung about him, and he looked rather too demure and artificial; above all, he was dazzled by the spectacle of four or five girls who laughed, talked, ventured to express an opinion, and did not keep their eyes immovably cast down. He certainly did not get on so well with us as with his tenant; we had very few subjects of interest in common; his family was one of the most strict and old-fashioned in Ancona, and his mother and sisters were rarely seen in society, or even beyond their own walls. We remarked to him that we never met them out, and he said that his mother disliked walking, and did not approve of trusting her daughters with any one but herself; so they only went to mass on Sundays and fests; and then in the afternoon, by way of taking the air, as well as for recreation, they repaired to a terrace on the roof of their house, from whence they enjoyed a distant view of the public gardens outside the Porta Pia, with all their promenaders, and the Corso delle Carrozze. Remembering the scanty rows of trees and patches of brambles dignified by this appellation, as well as the half-dozen antediluvian equipages therein displayed, it was scarcely possible to refrain from smiling; but as he spoke in perfect seriousness, I was compelled to check all tendency to mirth, and prosecute my inquiries. Why did not he then sometimes escort his sisters? He looked astonished, and replied, that his mother did not think this proper—other young men, his friends, might join them—in fact, it was not according to their ideas. This was a trait of manners so unique as to surprise even my cousins, accustomed as they were to the code of Ancona propriety; but they listened with provoking equanimity, and seemed more diverted at my amazement than at anything else. 'These poor people understand nothing of domestic life, or the happiness of domestic intercourse,' whispered Lucy pityingly: 'brothers and sisters are very different here from what they are in England.'

The two lively Polish girls, however, came to my assistance, though under certain reservations. 'Ah, *par exemple*,' cried Natalie V—, who, with her sister, had not long returned from completing her education at a convent in France; 'that is extraordinary! I remember at Les Oiseaux, that several of the girls had brothers who were allowed to see them in the *parloir* alone; and I know, when they returned home, they used to walk out with them sometimes. Pour aller dans le monde, certainly not; but if our brother was here instead of in the Caucasus, poor fellow, you should see, Monsieur le Comte, that Olga and I would outrage the *convenances* a little!'

The youth thus apostrophised smiled dubiously, and attempted to express that had he such charming sisters to accompany, he should be glad to enjoy the privileges of other countries, but being a novice in such matters, he broke down suddenly, and again fell a prey to my inquisitorial propensities. Was he fond of reading, and did he ever read aloud in the evening to his sisters while they worked? At this he fairly laughed, and said that *libri di devozione* were all very well while one was in the seminary, but he had had enough of them there, and knew the *Vita de' Santi* by heart, and therefore always kept out of the way when any *lettura* was going on.

'Then they are never allowed to read stories, or history, or—or romances?' I proffered the latter suggestion very hesitatingly, it must be owned.

'O no—of course not: his mother said girls must attend to the affairs of the house and to their religion; but as to books of entertainment, or travels, or anything of the sort, the less they read of them the better, as their heads would inevitably be turned, and they would be wanting to rove about the world, or be thinking about marriages of affection and lovers'—and at this last word he blushed.

Thus foiled at every effort, the conversation had almost come to a stand-still, when the noise, the stamping of feet, the clanging of *casseroles*, and hissing of frying-pans, reached their climax, a huge dish of macaroni was brought in, and we were told to *restar serviti*. No entreaties could induce any of our hospitable entertainers to seat themselves at table—they all insisted upon serving us; and between the intervals of carrying in the dishes and changing our plates, repaired to the kitchen, where our handmaids were also regaled, and made merry with right good-will. An amusing incident occurred just before we took our places, when Madame V— and all of us stood up, and she motioned to the young curato to say grace: he grew very red, began in Latin, then stopped abruptly, and whispered to the count imploringly: 'I have forgotten it: what am I to say?'

'Via, via,' was the rejoinder: 'say anything, say a *benedicite*;' which being hastily gone over, the poor priest, in much confusion, explained that he really did not remember any formula, being accustomed only to make the sign of the cross and say a paternoster.

The repast so closely resembled what I have described as usual at the marriage-feast, that any recapitulation would be tedious; neither vegetables nor fruit appeared, for they would have been considered too like everyday fare to do fitting honour to the occasion. As usual in such cases, one had to choose the alternative of eating and drinking to excess, or mortifying the good folks, whose hearts were set upon seeing us do justice to their good cheer. Wine, both red and white, abounded; and the young padrone took as much interest in its merits as the contadino himself, recommending the different qualities, and telling us of the various ways of preparing them. To the guests in the kitchen it was just as liberally dispensed, but no instance occurred of its abuse; there was not even any approach to uproarious hilarity. No quarrel or dispute impaired the harmony of the day; all the best features of the peasants' character had been displayed—their hospitality, their courtesy, their simple piety; and as we wended homeward, walking through lanes and vineyards a portion of the way to the foot of a declivity, where the broccio and carriage awaited us, we were enthusiastic in our praises. As a landed proprietor, the count was naturally pleased at these encomiums on his tenantry, but he somewhat damped our ardour by assuring us that we must look upon the contadini we had just quitted not as specimens of the whole race, but exceptions. 'Through all the pope's states,' he said, 'the country-people round Ancona are remarked as being generally good and well-conducted; but if you go only a short distance into the interior, a great difference is perceptible; and beginning at Loreto, which is only twenty miles from here, they are all noted for their implacability and revenge—and then, by way of illustration, he related some startling stories of treachery and murder, with as much coolness as if they were everyday straightforward occurrences. These narratives brought us to our equipages, in which we placed ourselves in the same order as when we came, but without much attempt at conversation; the young count, or hero of the day, as we had named him, fell into a reverie, which we attributed to fatigue, and Madame V—, in her excellent motherly way, recommended him to retire early, and take a *fait de*

poule. But two days afterwards furnished an elucidation of this mystery, in a visit to the Consolessa from the priest of her parish, who had been requested by Count M—— to inquire if her daughter Mademoiselle Natalie's hand was at liberty, and the amount of her dowry. The first of these questions, however, not being answered in a manner favourable to his wishes, there was no necessity for entering into a specific reply to the second.

Disappointed, but not dismayed, the trusty envoy presented himself, very shortly after, to my uncle with similar interrogatories relative to the *Cugina forestiera*, to which the proviso of a change of religion was subjoined. It is needless to give the tenor of his answer, or to add, that this adventure often furnished us with many amusing recollections, and was a magnificent termination to our christening-party.

DIVING.

By means of the submarine armour, Mr Quigley informs us, the diver is enabled to remain under water from three to four hours without inconvenience; and in one instance Mr Green remained over five hours in the Erie. Air is supplied to the diver through a flexible tube by a force-pump. He communicates with the surface by pulling a cord, and is also provided with a slate for writing, which is drawn up, upon signal, by those above. When the surface is comparatively still, there is sufficient light to enable one to read common news-print without difficulty. In descending, if lowered quickly, a painful sensation and dizziness is experienced by the diver during the first thirty feet; if lowered slowly, however, the lungs gradually become accustomed to the pressure of the air, and little inconvenience is occasioned. The weight required to sink the diver does not need to be increased in proportion to the depth, after a certain distance, as the pressure of the water above assists to counteract the buoyant tendency of that below. A weight of 125 pounds is used in descending to the Erie. A bottle tightly corked and hermetically sealed with wax was lowered, with the neck uppermost, by Mr Quigley, to the wreck of the *Atlantic*, 160 feet, and when drawn up was found two-thirds filled with water. A second experiment was made by lowering the bottle neck downward, and no water was found in the bottle—showing that the air in the first instance escaped through the cork.—*American paper*.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON AND VOLTAIRE ON RAILWAY TRAVELLING.

Sir Isaac Newton wrote a work upon the prophet Daniel, and another upon the book of Revelation, in one of which he said, that in order to fulfil certain prophecies before a certain date was terminated—namely, 1260 years—there would be a mode of travelling of which the men of his time had no conception; nay, that the knowledge of mankind would be so increased that they would be able to travel at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Voltaire, who did not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, got hold of this and said: 'Now look at that mighty mind of Newton, who discovered gravity, and told us such marvels for us all to admire. When he became an old man, and got into his dotage, he began to study that book called the Bible; and it seems that, in order to credit its fabulous nonsense, we must believe that the knowledge of mankind will be so increased that we shall be able to travel at the rate of fifty miles an hour. The poor dotard!' exclaimed the philosophic infidel Voltaire, in the self-complacency of his pity. But who is the dotard now?—*Rev. J. Craig*.

ORIGIN OF PERFUMES.

Dr Playfair, in his lecture 'On the Chemical Principles involved in the Manufactures of the Great Exhibition,' adverts to the fact, that 'some of the most delicate perfumes were made by chemical artifice, and not, as of old, by distilling them from flowers.' He goes on to state that perfumes thus prepared were sent to the Exhibition, and that, 'singularly enough, they are generally derived from

substances of an intensely disgusting odour. A peculiarly fetid oil, termed "fusel oil," formed in making brandy and whisky; 'putrid cheese,' a 'soap made with butter,' 'the fetid oils of gas-tar,' and 'the drainings of cow-houses,' are those stated to be the main source to which the manufacturer applies for the production of his most delicate and admired perfumes.

NATURE AND THE DREAMER.

BY MARIE J. EWEN.

With proud and lofty brow uplift, and earnest kindling eye,
A poet-dreamer stood beneath the great o'erarching sky;
The setting sun was on the sea, whose mighty waters rolled
With love-gifts from the Lord of Light, with purple and with gold.

In high majestic beauty crowned with banners bright unfurled,
Nature before the poet stood, a fair and wondrous world;
And steeped his soul in bounding life, in rapture deep and wild,
So that he felt once more indeed a simple joyous child.

The poet loved old Nature well: the busy haunts of men,
He in despair had madly fled, nor thought to seek again;
Amid the far blue solitudes he poured a reverent love
Upon the mountain altars, with the watching heaven above.

'O Life so free and beautiful! O world so strangely fair!
O trees and flowers, and gorgeous skies! O glad pure summer air!

It is a rapture here to breathe, a joy to feel the sun,
To dream of life immortal still when human life is done!

Ah, is it thus? Then surely truth must reach that soul of thine;
O minstrel, deemest thou thyself than Nature more divine?
Believe it still! for crowning joys, and sufferings, and death,
These are thy proud prerogatives, and these thy kingly wreath.

'Tis thine to search and comprehend, the world-deep mysteries,
Nobler in this than stars and suns, and fair insensate skies.
The soul may pierce through earth and heaven, the beautiful, sublime,
And reign in regal majesty beyond the shores of Time.

Then was it well to shun thy kind, to whom *one* God hath given
The same fair dreams, the same high powers, the same sweet hopes of heaven?
Oh, rather work together still—God smiling from above,
One Father and one brotherhood in sympathy and love.

The dreamer felt the stern rebuke—a thousand harmonies
Rose from the depths of Nature's heart, and filled the air and skies;
The perfume of a peace divine o'er all the land was borne,
And in that calm his soul laid down the burden of its scorn.

His spirit woke to bright new life, to lofty counsels then,
High hopes and olden memories came o'er him once again;
His eye with inspiration glowed, his soul was flushed with light,
He fell amid the ranks of men to combat for the right.

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